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# The University of Minnesota

GENERAL EXTENSION DIVISION

## COMMUNITY CENTERS

BY

RAYMOND V. PHELAN, Ph.D.

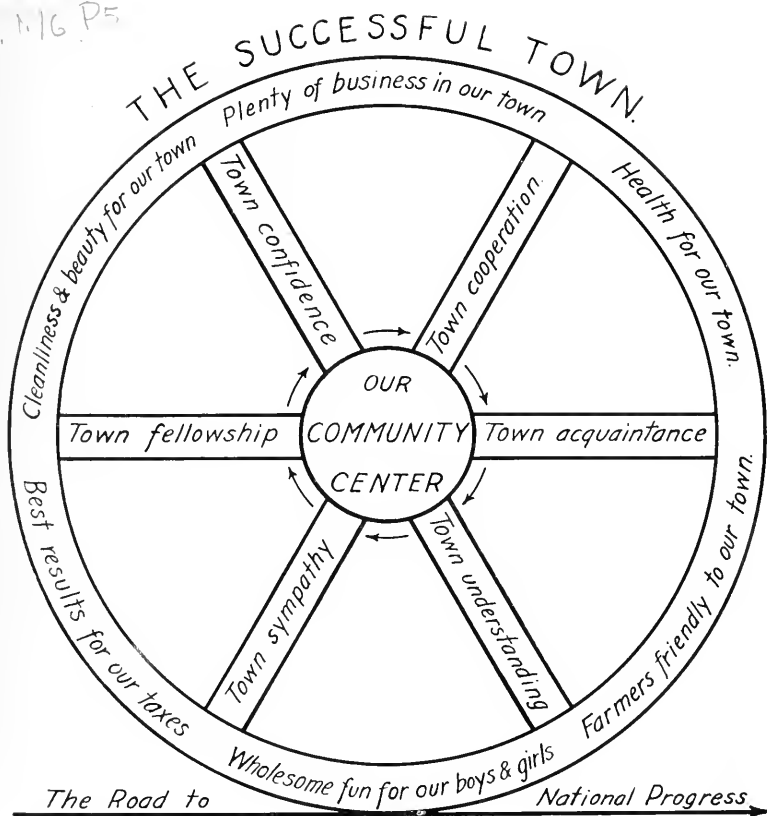


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## A COMMUNITY CENTER IS THE HUB OF TOWN PROGRESS

*Our Nation on Community Center Wheels  
Would Mean a Better America*

*Is Your Town on the Map of Progress?*



### A Training Camp

The World's Hope: The Professional Citizen instead of the Professional Soldier

# COMMUNITY CENTERS

By RAYMOND V. PHELAN, Ph.D.

The Community Center is a need of our time. In the middle ages, authority, hierarchy, divine right, and status ruled the world. The eighteenth century brought forth ideas of natural rights of life, liberty, and property, of equality before the law, of freedom in all departments of life and activity. There was to be a minimum of government and of regulation. Fair play and justice demanded that the arena of life be held wide open for everybody. Experience, however, has taught us that this job of holding open the gate involves in itself government regulation, and that an open arena without rules for the game often becomes a case of "a free fox in a free hen roost."

Free opportunity in the arena of life is necessary to fair play and justice. There must be also regulation of the game of life. Both the open gate and the regulated game call for effective laws and alert, intelligent public opinion. To promote such laws and such public opinion, society must know itself. People must come together, get acquainted with one another, sympathize with one another, co-operate with one another. The big answer to this need of popular co-operation is the Community Center.

The Community Center is both an idea and a device. As an idea it means community fraternalism. As a device, it may enable a community to know itself, its problems and something about their solution. A community center may help a community to be its best self. Physically speaking, a community center may be a schoolhouse, a town hall, a church, or any other building open to all the people for the promotion of town betterment and human well-being. Abstractly, it is the idea of town unity and co-operation, both within the town and with the surrounding country.

## The schoolhouse is the natural community center.

A community center association may be a business as well as a civic and social advantage. It may join civic spirit and business success by promoting between merchant and customer a bond of unselfish friendship. This in turn may strengthen in merchants

the spirit of service to their customers. Successful community centers either put or keep their towns on the map of progress and prosperity.

## ORGANIZATION OF COMMUNITY CENTERS

### I. Specific purposes of organization:

1. Wholesome recreation for all men, women and children
2. Clean, worth-while amusements
3. Training and self-expression for all, through athletics, music, speech-making, discussion, and dramatics
4. Promotion of public health
5. Securing of information on questions of human interest, through lectures and otherwise
6. A better town; cleaner, more moral, more artistic, more economical
7. A closer bond between towns-people, and also between town and country
8. More business; more life for less money

### II. Outline of organization:

1. A central organization to be known as The (name of town) Community Center Association
  - A. Various clubs to promote the several aims of the community center association:
    - A Civic Welfare Club
    - A Commercial Club
    - A Farmers' Club
    - A Literary Club
    - A Drama Club
    - A Teachers' and Parents' Association
    - Debating Clubs
    - Athletic Clubs of various kinds
    - Boy Scouts
    - Girl Scouts, and others
  - B. Public Library, Voters' League, Information Bureau
  - C. Clubs already in existence may become parts of a community center association

### III. Meeting Places:

School buildings, town hall, public library, churches, or any suitable building that either belongs to, or can be secured by the public, preferably schoolhouses



#### IV. Method of Organizing:

1. Have the local newspapers write up and push the idea of a community center
2. Have local preachers urge it
3. Have school superintendent and teachers talk it up in the schools
4. Have local clubs and lodges take up the idea
5. Hold a preliminary and widely advertised meeting to appoint a committee on constitution and on nomination of officers
6. Hold another public meeting with music and speeches and, if desired, a dinner. The University's Community Center promotor can be secured for such meetings. Have short speeches by local people. Adopt a constitution and elect officers. Select as president a person of commanding influence who can successfully conduct meetings and who is in full sympathy with your community movement. Your secretary should be one who is alert, conscientious, well-mannered, tactful, a good mixer, generally liked, dependable, progressive, energetic, and willing to give a reasonable amount of time to his community association. In many cases the school superintendent may be made secretary, for Community Center work may be regarded as part of a school superintendent's duty to his town. President and secretary should be persons able to give their association a good start, to cause it to gain in momentum, and to keep it going with constantly increasing success.

#### V. Results of a Successful Community Center:

1. Community understanding, sympathy, consciousness, and action for promotion of a better life for every member of your community
2. A central consciousness, intelligence, and force
3. An information bureau for farming and other business questions, political questions, and social questions
4. A watch-tower of government by the people
5. Closer co-operation between town and country
6. A foundation for a more progressive, cleaner, better, less expensive town and country in which to work, do business, and to live



Our Community Center  
Develops our town talent



A Meeting to Instruct Congress  
A Community Center may make your town a  
political watch-tower

## VI. Suggested Outline for a Constitution:

### PREAMBLE

It is the purpose of this organization to promote a better town and country-side in which to work, do business, and to live

Article I. Name: Community Center Association of (Name of town or community)

Article II. Object: To secure wholesome recreation, amusement, and development for every member of this community; to insure efficient, economical government in this community; to better educate its members to take their part intelligently and honestly in helping to solve not only the economic and political problems of this community, but also of the State of Minnesota, and of the nation.

Article III. Members: Every person sixteen or over living in this community may become an active and voting member of this Association upon giving his or her name and address to the Secretary. All persons in this community are members and are entitled to attend the meetings of the Association and to avail themselves of its benefits.

Article IV. Officers: Section 1. President, as many vice-presidents as may be decided upon, a secretary, treasurer, or a secretary and treasurer.

Section 2. Elections for one year.

Article V. Duties of Officers: Duties shall be the usual ones except that the various vice-presidents may in addition be the leaders of the various activities federated in the association.

Article VI. Committees: Executive Committee to consist of elected officers, with the usual powers and duties; other committees, the number and character of which will depend on the kinds of work undertaken from time to time by the association.

Article VII. Meetings: To be determined by local conditions and preferences.

Article VIII. Finances: No dues, except that active members may (or are expected to) pay .....cents a month to the Association. Contributions will be received.

Article IX. Quorum: Depends upon local conditions.

Article X. Amendment: By a two-thirds vote of members present at any regular meeting.

## BY-LAWS

1. Roberts' Rules of Order govern procedure in meetings of this Association.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

Business Meetings	Discussional Meetings
1. Call to order	1. Call to order
2. Reading of minutes	2. Music
3. Report of committees	3. Main speech or speeches
4. Reports of officers	4. Discussion
5. Unfinished and new business	5. Announcements
6. Adjournment	6. Social time 'if desired'
	7. Adjournment

## OTHER CONSTITUTIONS

Constitutions for the various clubs associated with the Community Center association may be modeled on the above constitution, but drafts of special constitutions if desired will be furnished free by the General Extension Division of the University of Minnesota. The University will also freely suggest topics for discussion, formulate plans for reform for your community, give information and advice, and furnish (at the lowest possible cost) capable and interesting speakers, also entertainment, musical, dramatic, and popularly scientific.

## VII. Suggested Subjects for Discussion, Study, and Reform:

### LOCAL PROBLEMS

The value of community centers  
The laws affecting our town  
Political conditions in our town  
Taxation in our town  
Our budget  
Crime and the courts in our town and county  
Morality in our town  
Poverty in our town  
Amusements and recreation  
Health and sanitation  
Housing in our town  
Water, sewerage, and garbage in our town  
The appearance of our town  
Art conditions in our town  
Labor conditions in our town

Farming in our vicinity  
Mining in our region  
Lumbering in our neighborhood  
Our manufacturers  
What the United States census tells about our town  
Our schools and their work  
Our young people when they leave or finish school  
Business conditions in our town  
Roads about our town  
Accommodations for people from the country  
Hotel conditions in our town  
Railroad service into our town

#### GENERAL PROBLEMS

Evolution of man  
Human progress  
American democracy  
City government  
Political reforms as initiative, referendum, recall, commission  
form of government  
Systems of taxation  
The woman movement  
Labor problems as woman and child labor, industrial health,  
industrial accidents, profit sharing, prevention of strikes,  
and others  
Immigration  
Sex reform  
Social insurance  
Old age pensions  
The drama and its lessons  
Art in its various aspects  
Trade unionism  
Socialism, syndicalism, single tax  
Technical advancement  
Public health and medical discoveries  
Educational theories and reforms  
Regulation of business  
Municipal ownership  
Public utilities regulation  
Banking reform  
Rural credit  
Business organization



Formerly a Railroad Sand Bank  
Six feet high, an unsightly dump, and dangerous



It Pays to Use a Schoolhouse  
at night as well as by day

Cost of doing business  
Cooperation  
Advertising  
Railroad service  
Our banking facilities  
Transportation problems  
Different kinds of insurance  
Living longer  
Making a United States census  
International peace  
Current topics, state, national, or world

All of these general topics should interest a wide-awake community which realizes that living within one's self or community means stagnation, and that also wishes to make its intelligent contribution to the solution of state, national, and world problems. Many of these general topics affect all persons indirectly, if not directly. Human waste, for example, in New York may increase the cost of the things that are bought or made in Minnesota. Good or bad conditions everywhere spread abroad their unfortunate influence. The University of Minnesota, General Extension Division, will suggest definite phases of these general topics and will supply capable and interesting lecturers, as well as assist, with suggestions and other helps, your local speakers.

## PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

### I. Purpose of Organization:

1. Sympathetic understanding between parent and teacher
2. For the teacher intimate knowledge of the child, his characteristics, and his environment
3. For the parent a knowledge of the teacher and of her difficulties
4. Co-operation between home and school
5. A heartier financial support of education
6. Better moral conditions in our town
7. Happier and more successful parents, teachers, and children
8. More community understanding, sympathy, and co-operation
9. A Parents' and Teachers' Association may become a full-fledged Community Center Organization

## II. Method of Organizing:

1. Newspaper editorials and articles
2. Advancement of the idea by preachers of your town
3. Encouragement of the plan by school superintendent and teachers
4. Hold organization meeting with entertainment and short speeches

## III. Special Topics Relating to the Welfare of the Child in School:

1. Is our school properly and economically supported (sometimes more money put into a school system is decidedly economical)
2. What changes would make our schools more effective
3. The health of our children
4. Truancy
5. Moral conditions and the teaching of sex hygiene
6. Athletics and entertainment for our children

## IV. Organization:

See suggestions for Constitutions of Community Centers (p.9)  
The University desires to be of every possible service to you.  
Address

General Extension Division

The University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota



## ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL EXTENSION DIVISION

1. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES in collegiate, industrial and business branches.
2. EXTENSION LECTURES, either single or in series, on informational or cultural subjects.
3. LYCEUM COURSES of popular lectures, concerts, and entertainments.
4. UNIVERSITY WEEKS, six-day programs of concerts, entertainments, readings, scientific demonstrations, debates and dramatics.
5. NIGHT CLASSES in the Twin Cities, Duluth and other centers.
6. DEBATING HELPS, through bulletins, bibliographies and schemes of organization.
7. LANTERN SLIDES as loans, accompanied by explanatory lecture.
8. MUNICIPAL REFERENCE BUREAU for collecting and compiling information for city officers.
9. COMMUNITY CENTER DEVELOPMENT for the wider use of schools and greater town success.
10. SHORT COURSES in merchandising, etc.
11. INFORMATION BUREAU for obtaining and furnishing information to citizens of the State.

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